

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

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NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06

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SUBJ: NICARAGUAN RECONSTRUCTION TECHNICAL SEMINAR

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE NICARAGUAN RECONSTRUCTION TECHNICAL SEMINAR APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS. THE NICARAGUAN SPONSORING COMMITTEE INCLUDED THE ACKNOWLEDGED LEADERS OF THE NICARAGUAN BUSINESS AND CONSTRUCTION COMMUNITIES, PLUS THE RECTOR OF THE CACM GRADUATE BUSINESS SCHOOL (INCAE). ATTENDANCE WAS GOOD QUANTATIVELY AND EXCELLENT QUALITATIVELY. A COMBINATION OF KNOWLEDGEABLE SPEAKERS AND EXCEPTIONALLY INTERESTING TOPICS PROVOKED SEVERAL STIMULATING DISCUSSIONS, ALL OF WHICH RECEIVED EXCELLENT PRESS COVERAGE FROM USIS AND THE THREE LOCAL NEWSPAPERS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT FOR THE TECHNICAL SEMINAR, TO BRING US EXPERIENCE TO BEAR ON NICARAGUAN PRIVATE SECTOR RECONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS, REQUIRED BOTH ELICITING THE PARTICIPATION OF KNOWLEDGEABLE US PRIVATE COMPANIES AND SECURING THE COOPERATION OF QUOTE PRIME MOVERS END QUOTE FROM THE NICARAGUAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY. THE FIRST AND MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEM, ENLISTING GOOD US SPEAKERS, WAS ADMIRABLY RESOLVED BY THE COMMERCE PROJECT

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OFFICER. AS WAS TRUE OF ALL OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE DEPARTMENT'S SUPPORT FOR THIS SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL PROJECT, CONSTANT ATTENTION TO QUALITY ENSURED OUR SUCCESS.

3. AS THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE SEMINAR CONCEPT AROSE IN RESPONSE TO NEEDS EXPRESSED DURING INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN LATE DECEMBER AND EARLY JANUARY, SECURING LOCAL BUSINESS COOPERATION WAS RELATIVELY SIMPLE. SUPPORT FROM THE CHAMBERS OF INDUSTRY, CONSTRUCTION AND COMMERCE, THE ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS, THE HEAD OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY ARCHITECTURAL DEPARTMENT AND THE RECTOR OF INCAE INCLUDED CONSULTATION AND ADVICE DURING THE FORMATIVE STAGES, ASSISTANCE IN PUBLICIZING THE EVENT AMONG ASSOCIATION MEMBERS AND PARTICIPATION AS DISCUSSION MODERATORS AT THE SEMINAR ITSELF.

4. ATTENDANCE AT THE SEMINAR WAS ABOUT 150-160 OVER THE TWO DAYS. IN ADDITION TO THE OFFICERS AND MORE IMPORTANT MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, THE GON WAS REPRESENTED BY THE MINISTER OF THE NATIONAL DISTRICT, THE MINISTER OF HEALTH, THE DIRECTOR OF URBAN PLANNING, THE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL BANK, THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL BANK, THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL INVESTMENT BANK, THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL WATER AND SEWAGE DEPARTMENT AND THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT ATTEND THE SEMINAR, GENERAL ANASTASIO SOMOZA, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE, ASKED AMBASSADOR SHELTON TO BRING THE US PARTICIPANTS TO HIS HOME FOR AN UNUSUALLY LONG PRIVATE DISCUSSION OF THE SEMINAR TOPICS.

5. PRESENTATIONS BY THE US SPEAKERS WERE AIMED AT PROVIDING USEFUL INFORMATION BASED UPON US EXPERIENCE, STIMULATING QUESTIONS ARISING FROM SPECIFICALLY NICARAGUAN CIRCUMSTANCES AND ESTABLISHING THE BASIS FOR MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL DISCUSSION BETWEEN US SPEAKERS AND NICARAGUAN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERS. THEY WERE ON TARGET ON EVERY COUNT. FOR TWO DAYS WE WITNESSED WHAT WERE PROBABLY THE BROADEST RANGING, UNCLASSIFIED

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MOST OPEN DISCUSSIONS EVER HELD BETWEEN SUCH RELATIVELY LARGE GROUPS OF NICARAGUAN OPINION MAKERS. LITERALLY EVERYONE WE TALKED TO DURING AND AFTER THE SEMINAR AGREED THAT THE IDEAS HEARD DURING THE TALKS WERE ESPECIALLY USEFUL. A GOOD MANY IN ATTENDANCE ALSO VOLUNTEERED THEIR BELIEF THAT A SECONDARY, BUT ALMOST EQUALLY IMPORTANT, FUNCTION OF THE SEMINAR WAS TO PROVIDE AN

ALMOST UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERCHANGE AMONG THE
NICARAGUANS THEMSELVES.

6. PRESS COVERAGE, THANKS IN LARGE PART TO THE
ENTHUSIASTIC COOPERATION OF USIS, WAS EXCEPTIONAL.
SINCE ATTENDANCE WAS BY INVITATION ONLY, TV AND PRESS
COVERAGE BEFORE THE EVENT WAS PURPOSEFULLY ORIENTED
TOWARD AN EXPLANATION OF INTENTIONS, RATHER THAN PROMOTION
OF ATTENDANCE. ONCE THE SEMINAR GOT UNDERWAY, A SERIES
OF RADIO INTERVIEWS AND DETAILED NEWSPAPER COLUMNS
BROUGHT TO A MUCH WIDER AUDIENCE THE SUBSTANCE OF THE
SPEECHES AND SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS. COVERAGE WAS
DETAILED, ACCURATE AND UNIFORMLY POSITIVE.

7. FOLLOW- UP TO THE SUCCESS OF THE SEMINAR WILL BE
ALONG TWO NATURAL LINES. FIRST, WE HAVE DISTRIBUTED
COPIES OF THE PRESENTATIONS TO THE MAJOR SUPPORTING
ORGANIZATIONS FOR BACK GROUND AND FURTHER DISCUSSION
WITH THEIR MEMBERS. SUPPORTING MATERIAL PROVIDED
BY THE BUREAU OF STANDARDS, OPIC AND THE SMALL
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION IS ALSO BEING GIVEN TO
INTERESTED KEY PEOOPLE. SECOND, WE BELIEVE THE TIME
HAS COME TO PREPARE A FULL- SCALE US TRADE MISSION
TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY
DEVELOPMENTS IN RECONSTRUCTION PLANNING AND POINTED
OUT BY THE SEMINAR. WE WILL BE SUBMITTING CONCRETE
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOTH TIME AND PRODUCT LINES FOR
THIS MISSION IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
SHELTON

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